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New South

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Negro Municipal Workers in the South

By Harold O. DeWitt

LLOYD K. GARRISON, President of the National Urban League, speaking to the Rotary Club of Denver in 1949, said, "I know of no more American idea than this one of giving every individual a chance to work at jobs for which he is fitted, without putting in his way artificial barriers based upon some accident of birth.

"And in the delicate and difficult field of race relations no more constructive steps can be taken than actually putting this idea in practice, because consider what flows out of it: a rising standard of living for the artificially depressed group, which means better homes, better family life, better adjusted individuals with bigger stakes in the community; and this in turn

CITY	MANAGERIAL PROFESSIONAL	CLERICAL	SEMI-PROFESSIONAL	SKILLED	SEMI-SKILLED	SERVICE AND UNSKILLED
Atlanta	59	9		2	60	638
Birmingham	35		11			629
Dallas*	3		1		30	278
Fort Worth	14	1		1		33
Houston	40	1	7	1	93	865
Jacksonville	18					261
Knoxville	26	2			7	272
Little Rock	8	7				26
Louisville	73	3		2	2	377
Miami	16	3				630
Nashville**	7	7		4	2	316
New Orleans	27	2	17	3	11	349
Norfolk	86	4		16	14	543
Oklahoma City	15	4	1		12	54
Richmond	34	2	34	14	31	251
San Antonio	7	1			7	68
TOTALS	468	46	71	43	269	5590

* Classification of workers not comprehensive. ** Incomplete record; Negroes not listed for some non-segregated departments.

NEGRO MUNICIPAL WORKERS BY DEPARTMENT

TABLES COMPILED BY THE INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS DEPARTMENT, RICHMOND URBAN LEAGUE

CITY	COURTS	FINANCE	HEALTH	LIBRARY	RECREATION AND PARKS	SAFETY	PUBLIC UTILITIES	WELFARE	PUBLIC WORKS	OTHER	TOTALS
Atlanta			262	24	21	21	153		134	153	768
Birmingham			59	24	103	4	10		450	25	675
Dallas		1	4	8	25	?	160		102	12	312
Fort Worth			7	6	18				6	12	49
Houston			252	3	41	50	491	5	152	13	1007
Jacksonville			25	4	7		16		227		279
Knoxville			77	9	31	12	104	4	70		307
Little Rock			6	3	26	6					41
Louisville	1		128		87	60		14	167		457
Miami	2			5	14	39	116		473		649
Nashville	10		91	2	1*	25		4	54*	149	336
New Orleans			34	7	15			30	227	96	409
Norfolk	10	1	78	9	113	20	93	19	320		663
Oklahoma City			6	5	16	11			48		86
Richmond	9		61	5	61	21		54	155		366
San Antonio	1		6		11	8			43	14	83
TOTALS	33	2	1096	114	590	277	1143	130	2628	474	6487**

* Not comprehensive; departments are non-segregated and do not list Negroes separately.

** Does not include professional school board employees.

means more individuals qualified for more responsible work, not as charity, not as a favor, but on their merits; their standard of living again rises; and so the spiral moves constantly upward in accordance with the old adage that nothing succeeds like success."

Since its beginning in 1910, the National Urban League and its fifty-eight affiliates have striven to improve the economic status of the Negro. Locally, Leagues work toward the opening up of areas of employment which discriminate against the Negro.

Employment Surveys

Two surveys — one on Negro firefighters and the other on Negro municipal employees in the South — were compiled to clarify the thinking of those people who would deny employment solely because of race. Over 110 different job classifications above the unskilled level are held by Negroes in the South, though as yet no one city has opened up as many as one-third of these classifications to qualified Negroes. Negroes are employed by municipalities in such clerical capacities as mimeograph operator, clerk-stenographer, and cashier; in such service occupations as fireman, policeman, bailiff, and dog-catcher; in such semi-skilled occupations as paver and equipment operators; in such skilled occupations as foreman, painter, and bricklayer; in such professional occupations as social worker, physician, nurse, and municipal judge.

The only consistent policies followed by Southern cities have been, first, to confine Negroes largely to the menial unskilled and service jobs which are often called "inherited occupations," and, secondly, to confine employment of Negroes in the better paying jobs to Negro areas or to segregated Negro departments. Yet, even in these policies, there is a wide variance from city to city.

A personnel director once said that "an automobile doesn't care about the color of the person who is fixing it." In addition, we might say that a water meter doesn't care about the color of the person who reads it; a mother doesn't care about the color of the person who saves the life of her child or saves her home from burning; and a sidewalk doesn't care who finishes the cement. If this is so, why is everyone so slow to open up new occupational areas to Negroes? In general, the major cause seems to be fear of criticism for "going too fast."

It is the hope of the compiler of this information that it will be read by those persons who are in a position to open these employment opportunities to all people. Perhaps their fear of going too fast will be supplanted by the knowledge that they have gone too slowly and, as a result, their city has often been denied the chance to secure the best person for the job.

If Charleston has had 69 years, Nashville 83 years, and Mobile 130 years of profitable experience with Negro firefighters, then why is it that only six Southern cities currently employ them? We honestly believe that the major reason is the lack of knowledge of what is taking place in the region. Knowledge is as essential to progress in the area of employment as it is in the area of education.

Picture a southern city with Negroes employed in the following job classifications according to departments:

COURTS
Municipal Judge, Corporation Court Warrant Server, Bailiff, Probation Officer, Police Court Matron, Recreation Worker, Children's Supervisor, Stenographer, Clerk, and Watchman.

FINANCE
Messenger, Clerk, and License Inspector.

HEALTH
Physician, Pediatrician, Dentist, Graduate Nurse, Public Health Nurse, Visiting Nurse, P. H. Nurse Supervisor, Hospital Nurse Supervisor, Clinic Attendant, Junior Health Educator, Medical Social Worker, Public Health Investigator, V. D. Social Worker, Health Inspector, Case Worker, Clerk-Stenographer, Clerk-Typist, Auto Messenger Clerk, Food Service Supervisor, Messenger, Fireman, Stationary Engineer, Painter, Maintenance Man, and Sanitarian.

LIBRARY
Librarian, Library Assistant, Library Aide, Branch Librarian, Trailer Librarian, Shelver, Clerk, and Page.

RECREATION AND PARKS
Recreation Supervisor, Chief Recreation Supervisor, Recreation Center Director, Recreation Ac-

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Mr. DeWitt is Industrial Secretary of the Richmond Urban League, for which he conducted the survey summarized here. He is currently on leave of absence and is serving as Acting Industrial Relations Director of the Urban League's Southern Field Division in Atlanta.

NEGRO FIREMEN IN SOUTHERN CITIES, 1951

City	Captains	Lieutenants	Other	Total
Charleston, S. C.	1	1	12	14
Louisville, Ky.	2	2	16	20
Mobile, Ala.	2		5	7
Nashville, Tenn.	1	1	10	12
Richmond, Va.			10	10
Winston-Salem, N. C.			6	6
TOTALS	6	4	59	69

tivities Specialist, Community Recreation Leader, Recreation Leader, Athletic Superintendent, Foreman, Cashier, Park Ranger, Cemetery Keeper, Music Instructor, Arts and Crafts Instructor, Motion Picture Instructor, Recreation Center Hostess, Museum Custodian, Policeman, Clerk-Stenographer, and Zoo Attendant.

SAFETY
Policeman, Detective, Policewoman, School Patrolman, Firefighter, Woman's Reformatory Matron, Institutional House Mother, Institutional House Father, Dog Catcher, Foreman, Stationary Fireman.

PUBLIC UTILITIES
Meter Reader and Maintenance Mechanic.

WELFARE
Case Worker, Community Service Worker, Community Recreation Inspector, Social Worker, Case Work Supervisor, Clinic Case Investigator, Child Welfare Worker, House Manager, Nurse, House Mother, House Father, Clerk, Stenographer.

PUBLIC WORKS
Labor Foreman, Sewer Foreman, Street Machine Operator, Motor Driver, Watchman, Cement Finisher, Asphalt Plant Operator, Caulker, Bricklayer, Equipment Operator, Paver, Maintenance Repairman, and Pipe Layer.

OTHER
Messenger, Clerk, Mimeograph Machine Operator, Painter, and Auditorium Manager.

No, there is no such city in the South, **yet Negroes hold every one of these positions in one or more Southern cities.** If such an employment pattern existed in **one** city — plus the growing practice of Negro representation on city councils, city commissions, and the boards of charitable and welfare organizations — we would have a city in the South with a minimum pattern of discrimination.

Experience shows that it is possible for Southern cities to be democratic. The history of employment of Negroes in the jobs listed above has been very satisfactory. In most cases, the type of Negro applicant who is available is superior to applicants who have been employed previously. In addition, they are available in greater numbers.

In one Southern city, over two-hundred female applicants applied for four openings as elevator operators in the City Hall when these jobs were opened to Negroes; practically every one had a high school education or better. In that city alone, we could cite the 150 or more applicants who applied for the first crew of firefighters; the over 200 applicants with a college background, including several M.A.'s who applied for temporary jobs with the Census Bureau; and the more than 90 applicants who applied for **one** opening in the Health Department. In practically every case, the workers possessed qualifications greatly in excess of the job specifications.

With labor shortages developing in many areas due to mobilization and defense expansion, we constantly are referring to additional sources of labor supply. New entrants in the labor market, overage workers who are willing to return to gainful employment, and female workers who are being trained to perform new tasks are listed as the three major sources of additional labor. However, the greatest source of untapped labor in the South and in many other areas is the huge number of Negro workers who are working at jobs below their highest skill, or who are unemployed because of the undemocratic hiring practices of the region.

Can any region or municipality or plant afford not to use this available source of labor? Quite obviously the answer is "no." Plant production and the quality of service must, of necessity, suffer when the skills required are not best matched by the persons performing these skills.

Quite often persons who honestly desire to face the task of integrating minority groups into the work force are uncertain because of unnecessary fears. Personnel managers who have faced this problem squarely affirm that these fears are unfounded. First, the decision to hire on the basis of merit means simply the need to express a clear-cut, firm decision from the

(*Continued on page* 8)

A Georgia Debate

Higher Education and Segregation

A panel discussion held recently at Emory University in Atlanta dealt with the timely subject: "Can Georgia Constitutionally Maintain Segregation in Its Colleges?" Panel members were Mr. Durwood Pye, Atlanta attorney; Mr. Roy Harris, Augusta attorney and state political figure; Dr. Paul Bryan, professor of law at Emory University; and Dr. Jay Murphy, professor of law at the University of Alabama.

Because of space limitations it is impossible to present the entire transcript of the discussion. But the following excerpted remarks by Mr. Harris and Dr. Bryan provide a contrast of special interest to NEW SOUTH *readers.*

ROY HARRIS:

. . . On these questions I **could** have told you what the law was in the United States for a period of fifty years. I can't tell you today what the law is, and I don't think anybody else can tell you what the Supreme Court will do. . . . They haven't done away with the old doctrine that they established in 1895 that we could have separate and equal facilities. They haven't said so in so many words. But they have ducked the issue and they've gone around it and practically done away with it.

Now what they'll do next time, nobody knows. The last thing I want to try to do is engage in a guessing contest as to what that bunch of monkeys are going to do the next time a case gets there. . . .

I can't tell you what the law is, and I'm not going to try to guess what the Supreme Court will do. But I have come here to tell you what is going to happen in Georgia during the next four years. I just wonder if there is any doubt in the minds of anybody here as to what is going to happen in Georgia during the next four years. I am going to tell you there will be separate institutions [for the two races] in this state. There will be separate colleges or there will be none at all. I don't know how many of us are going to have to go to jail. But if we do have to go to jail, we are going. There are not enough Federal soldiers or enough Federal bayonets in the United States to put [white and Negro students] in the same classroom during the next four years.

Now, let's get down to the [Georgia] appropriations bill of 1951. I want to tell you that those provisions in the appropriations bill of 1951 wouldn't be there if we had any confidence in the Supreme Court of the United States. They are put there because we do fear that Court. They are put there because we don't know what they are going to do. They are put there because we anticipate that they will go all the way and say there can be no such thing as separate and equal facilities.

No Money for Colleges?

We say to you in the appropriations bill of 1951 that if that happens there will be no money paid out of the state treasury to support the colleges of this state. The Supreme Court of the United States can't make the State of Georgia levy taxes or appropriate money for the support of schools. That can't be done. They may put somebody in jail, but they will sit in jail; for the next four years there won't be any money. I don't know whether those provisions are constitutional or not. But if they are ever held unconstitutional, there will be another session of the Legislature and your taxes repealed and there won't be any money. The government of this state, the legislature of this state, have made up their minds that for the next four years there will be separate schools for the two races in this state, and I am here to tell you there **will** be separate schools. . . .

We are anticipating when these provi-

sions are written in the appropriations bill of 1951 that the worst could happen, that the Supreme Court of the United States could say that we had to do away with separate schools for white and colored. That provision was written in there deliberately for the sole purpose of cutting off the money . . . because if those in authority refuse to sign the checks, there isn't any law by which the Supreme Court of the United States can come down here and appoint a receiver to take over the government of the State of Georgia. . . .

"Nobody Knows"

They have changed the law. I don't think it is any longer any use to study the decisions of the Supreme Court. Because another Court can meet and repeal all you know over night. Nobody will know what the law is. When I started to practice law thirty years ago, good lawyers in this state went into the court with full confidence that they knew the law, that they had prepared their cases; they knew what to expect. When you try a case today, if it involves a Federal question, nobody knows what the law is and what the Supreme Court will do. Instead of following precedent, following decisions of the past, following the traditions of the past, they have followed their own political philosophy; and they have carved out a new philosophy entirely foreign to that which we have always believed. They have said that the language of the Constitution doesn't mean what they said it meant fifty years ago; they have said it means something else. We hold with the view that the language means the same thing now that it did in 1875 and in 1895.

We are prepared to see that for the next four years — and we hope from now on — there will be separate schools in this state. At the same time, we recognize the fact that we have never had equal facilities in Georgia. We think that the colored people are entitled to equal facilities. We have tried to inaugurate a program that we believe will give them equal facilities in this state, not only in the colleges but also in the public school system. In this state we have approximately 20,000 students in the University System. 2200 of them are Negroes in four colleges — one at Americus, one at Albany, one at Savannah, and one at Fort Valley. On account of its central location in the state and in the middle of the Negro population of this state, we have planned and hope to build at Fort Valley a Negro institution that will be a credit to any state and to the Negro people everywhere.

We believe that we've got a right to build equal facilities at Fort Valley, equal to that of the University of Georgia at Athens and give to the Negroes of this state every opportunity that the white people now enjoy, recognizing that in the past we have not fulfilled that obligation. We believe by building separate institutions, giving them the same advantages that we have, and maintaining the traditional pattern of segregation in Georgia that we will be acting in the best interests not only of the white people but of the Negroes as well.

I think our forefathers, when they designed the pattern of segregation to maintain racial integrity in both races, designed the only pattern under which two races so different can live in peace and in harmony. If you undertake to mix them in this state, you will find that you won't see peace and harmony. You will see bloodshed from one end of this state to the other. . . .

PAUL BRYAN:

. . . I thought we had come together this afternoon to discuss the law, but Mr. Harris admits in one fell swoop that he doesn't know the law and that he will not undertake to discuss the law, and proceeds to discuss the matter from the standpoint of Southern prejudice, and prejudice only. I will be quite frank to say that I was born probably with the same prejudices Mr. Harris was born with. For years I lived with those prejudices and among such prejudices. . . .

I thank God that I have overcome most of those prejudices. . . . I think I have come to where I can consider the law of the matter, and that is what I should like to consider at this moment.

I submit that the question we were called here to discuss is the question whether Georgia can constitutionally provide segregated education in its colleges and universities. We are not here to discuss social consequences. After all, the

Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution — which is the one, of course, we are concerned with — is addressed to states as governmental entities and not to individual citizens of those states. . . . There are two clauses in that Amendment that we are primarily concerned with: "Nor shall any state deprive any person of life, liberty, or property without due process of law, nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the law."

Obvious Meaning

It seems to me that language of more obvious meaning would be difficult to find. And yet [Mr. Harris] stands up here and seriously asserts that it doesn't mean what it says, and that if the Supreme Court says that is what it means, then the Supreme Court is a bunch of monkeys.

I freely admit that the Supreme Court has never yet — because it has not yet been obliged to — passed on segregation as an institution. I don't know what they will say when that comes up, as I suppose it will ultimately. But I don't think civilization is going to fall, even if they should hold [against it]. . . .

The question is, what are the Negro's legal rights under the Constitution? Now certainly the Negro is a person, and the Constitution doesn't say anything about black persons or white persons or yellow persons or any other kind of persons. It just says "persons." "Nor shall any **person** within the jurisdiction of the states be denied the equal protection of the law." The Court has held several times that that phrase means the protection of equal laws. And it also has told us that that means that everybody, every person within the jurisdiction of a state is entitled to equal treatment under the laws of that state; that's all — equal treatment. . . .

We aren't talking about social matters at all. That is wholly beside the point. We are not talking about any prejudice that anybody might have in a social way. Maybe you don't like to be with Negroes. Well, there are a lot of white people you don't like to be with, too, I dare say, and probably you don't associate with them when you can help it — and you usually manage to help it pretty well.

The Fourteenth Amendment doesn't undertake to compel anybody to embrace a Negro as a friend if he doesn't want to. But it does say to the state, "Whenever you pass a law and enforce that law, you must give equal treatment under that law to all persons within your jurisdiction." There it is in plain words. Some of you don't approve of it. Mr. Harris doesn't; he's just going to ignore it. What kind of government are we going to have down here, anyway, if we deny that the Constitution has any force in Georgia? Under our system, it just happens that the interpretation of the Constitution is lodged finally with the Supreme Court, regardless of what title you give the Supreme Court. . . . We have a government here, we are supposed to be a democratic nation, we have a Constitution, we have a president, we have a Supreme Court. Mr. Harris would apparently just ignore the whole thing, and Georgia will just merrily go its way down the primrose path. . . .

Our learned opposition has made something of the fact that the Supreme Court has changed its mind from generation to generation. I don't see anything very strange about that. Public opinion has changed from generation to generation. Just take the matter of women's apparel; they can wear things out on the street now that would have put them in jail when I was young. There was a change of public opinion. And when the public changes, it just happens that judges are human, and their opinions may change also. That isn't remarkable. . . .

Supreme Court Rulings

In the Sweatt case and the McLaurin case, the Supreme Court used some very categorical language, and the Court in those two cases was absolutely unanimous; not the remotest sign of a dissent in either case. In the McLaurin case, they held that Oklahoma, having admitted a Negro under the mandate of a former Supreme Court case, could not segregate him. . . . [In the Sweatt case] Chief Justice Vinson, who is a Southerner by the way, said in many respects the two law schools were not equal. The University law school at Austin was far superior to the one [established for Negroes] at Houston, in library, faculty, course of instruction, the ability to further oneself by associating with many other students, . . . the reputation of the

law school. . . .

I would like to see Mr. Harris have a choice between those two law schools. [Chief Justice Vinson] says, "It is difficult to believe that one who has free choice between these law schools would consider the question even close." I don't see any way to argue with that. I don't see why the Supreme Court is a bunch of monkeys for making such obviously correct decisions as that. It seems to me we ought to honor them for having the courage to do what they see to be the right thing. And I'm talking about "right," now, under the law. I'm not talking about what we are going to do as a matter of dire consequence if this goes into effect. That's up to us — whether we will be United States citizens or outcasts is up to us, and only up to us.

Municipal Workers

(*Continued from page* 4)

top, with instructions issued down the line — and one follow-up for adherence.

Second, success can be insured by making sure that the initial workers are signally qualified and are conscious of the need to get off to a good start. When these two matters have been taken care of, it will be found that other workers and the community at large will fully accept such integration. That has been the rule in all areas: Negro policemen, firemen, health inspectors, and the rest have been accepted by all segments of the community as a matter-of-course.

The information in the accompanying tables is presented in the hope that, where a door is already open, others will open more readily.

IN MID-MARCH the Executive Director of the Council, at the invitation of the Louisiana Division of SRC, made a trip to a number of Louisiana cities. New local interracial committees were organized at Lafayette, Alexandria, and Ruston, and the long-established interracial committee at Baton Rouge was re-formed. At Lake Charles a new chapter of SRC was set up.

Friends and members in Louisiana interested in extending the work in the State are invited to be in touch with the Acting Chairman of the Louisiana Division, the Rev. L. J. Twomey, S.J., at Loyola University, New Orleans, or with the Secretary-Treasurer, Miss I. D. Jenkins, Southern University, Baton Rouge.

WAYS OF IMPROVING human relations through religion, government, and youth were developed by the Georgia Committee on Interracial Cooperation at its recent annual sessions. The Committee met in Atlanta on April 4 and in Macon on April 18.

In the workshops, distinguished religious leaders of both races agreed that the churches have a special duty to oppose prejudice and discrimination; the group resolved to work for the elimination of race hatred in campaigns for public office. A program of civic action was drafted to effect a broader democracy in suffrage, welfare services, education, and freedom of the press.

A panel of students from white and Negro institutions over the state discussed the subject: "What Next in Building a New South?"

A note of warning was sounded on the subject of teachers' salaries — recently scaled to professional qualifications by a 1951 Georgia law. In some counties, it was pointed out, moves are under way to replace highly qualified Negro teachers with others whose lack of training will merit smaller salaries.

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